




Speech By  
**David Crisafulli**

**MEMBER FOR BROADWATER**

---

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2018

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DISSOLUTION OF IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL) BILL**

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (12.36 pm): From the outset, I say that I too will not be opposing the bill. I would like to make a contribution and am most grateful the minister is here. The first reason I will not be opposing the bill is that the intent is correct. The minister is trying to solve a problem that is real and needs solving. The community needs certainty to be able to get on after a very chequered period. The other reason I will not be opposing it is that this is now the third iteration in one form or another to try to get certainty. To oppose this would only prolong the issues that I have already outlined. In bringing this legislation to this place I would have hoped that this was taken care of earlier, but we move on.

I will not be opposing the bill because there also is a crooked culture at this specific council that needs to be fixed. We heard contributions and barbs during question time today about it not being a Labor council. I am sorry, but I suggest that the Labor Party's DNA runs through this council. I suggest that the community feels very taken for granted by what it has seen. The community deserves a fresh start.

I want to make a contribution about local government as a whole. The member for Mermaid Beach spoke about his experience in local government and I will talk briefly about mine. We are seeing a handful of bad apples. The handful of bad apples may stretch across a few councils and if they do we must absolutely make sure that they feel the full weight of the law. I do not want to see what we have seen in this council and the allegations that have been levelled at other councils used as a stalking horse to remove power for local decision-makers. In this chamber on both sides are people who have served in local government. There are good people on both sides of this House who have served in local governments and made good contributions.

We must every day give the right for somebody to put their hand up and to serve under the terms that their community gives them. There are times that they will make honest mistakes. If they make honest mistakes, the electorate will judge them accordingly. If they are dishonest and the minister has suggestions for where legislation needs to be toughened to go after those handful of bad apples—we have previously seen legislation in this House that, for example, increased the penalties for those using inside information while on a council—the minister should bring those suggestions forward, but please do not use this to centralise control of councils and do not use this to usurp local decision-making.

As much as I believe the minister acts in good faith, faced with the choice of a decision for the Boulia Shire Council by Rick Britton or Stirling Hinchliffe, I will take Rick Britton, elected by the local community. Faced with the choice of a decision in the Cairns community by Councillor Manning or a local government minister, I will always take the mayor. Again, if the mayor makes the wrong decision, that mayor should be accountable for his or her actions. If the mayor is one of those bad apples then legislation needs to be in place to ensure that that mayor is dealt with. That does not give the right of those in this place to remove the ability for local people to make decisions for their local community.

We are talking about councils in some parts of this state that only have several hundred constituents and we are talking about the largest council in the nation. Those councils are all here in this state, but we must give the ability for those local decision-makers to make decisions. If it requires tougher legislation to clamp down on those bad apples, fine, but, if it goes back to the bad old days of central control and command, the quality of people attracted to local government will not be there.

The member for Mermaid Beach shared his memory of the amalgamations of the Mulgrave and Albert and Moreton council. I will take members back to a period when I served in council when the amalgamations were far more savage, far more widespread and, indeed, were greeted with a far greater level of anger from the community—and that was in 2007. I was part of one of those councils that was amalgamated. I was someone who believed that my council should have been amalgamated because I thought there were some similarities. There were other councils where that should not have occurred.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** The member's seat is over there, so I will not take the interjection. There will always be a case where local communities are passionate about their council and they want local representation. The level of anger that was felt during those forced amalgamations was simply because the communities rallied because they wanted local decision-making. The same anger will be felt if the trend of centralised decision-making in Brisbane over the regions is fulfilled. I ask the minister to give serious consideration, as I do, to the amendment put forward by my friend the shadow minister. It is a good amendment, and it is that the names of those appointed to the advisory committee be published in the *Government Gazette*.

For the people of Ipswich to have faith not just in the interim administrator, not just in the person who might act in that capacity but, indeed, in the advisory board, those names must be published because those names deserve to be scrutinised. Those people must be people who are of the highest integrity, not carrying political baggage. They must be people who understand what good government is. They must understand local government. They must understand community, because the interim administrator, when he or she is appointed, becomes the council. They become the mayor and the councillors. They usurp the authority of a lot of elected officials. They go into that role not having to be accountable to the community but, indeed, having to be accountable to the minister.

Quite rightly, the minister will gazette that person's name. That person will also take advice and guidance from that advisory committee, so it is fair and reasonable that those names are put forward. It is fair and reasonable that those people form a role as a good council would to that mayor, where the mayor is the first amongst equals, where the mayor has a large say in the direction of the city but where those councillors are able to assist the mayor in all sorts of things like preparations of budgets. That advisory committee has to act in that capacity with the interim administrator.

I come back to where I started, and that is to say that we will not be opposing the bill. It is the third crack we get at this. The people of Ipswich do deserve certainty. This council is one that has quite rightly come under the microscope. It is one that has let down its political branding, and that political branding is the Labor Party whether those opposite like it or not. In getting this bill through, in cleaning up the mess of previous legislative attempts in this place, in cleaning up the mess of a council that has not acted according to the wishes of its electorate, I do not seek to have the system of governance in this state trashed and the roles of the other representatives of councils who are not found to be doing the wrong thing consigned to the dustbin of a centralised governing system of history.